



**Puya Gerami**  
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**HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status**  
**February 14, 2023**  
**Supports**

Good evening Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and distinguished members of the committee.

My name is Puya Gerami. I live in New Haven. I serve as director of Recovery For All—a statewide coalition bringing together more than 60 community, faith, and labor organizations across Connecticut. We represent hundreds of thousands of residents from all walks of life. All our member organizations stand united behind a vision of rebuilding a better Connecticut where extreme racial, economic, and gender inequities are eliminated.

Last month, our coalition unveiled our Equity Agenda before a diverse crowd in the Hall of Flags at the Capitol. This agenda is a set of specific policies that would transform struggling multiracial communities all across this state. Expanding Husky eligibility for all residents regardless of immigration status or age is one of the crucial components of our Equity Agenda.

The exclusion of our immigrant residents from Husky and the hardship they have to endure as a result offers one of the most tragic examples of Connecticut’s extreme social disparities. The data on the lack of health insurance coverage for our immigrant residents is shocking. The stories that our immigrant residents have shared about the pain and suffering they have to confront are heartbreaking. We can’t have true equity in our state so long as some of our residents are denied coverage because of where they come from or how old they are. After all, in the wealthiest state in the world’s wealthiest country, health care should be a fundamental right guaranteed to every resident.

This measure is not only sensible public policy—it’s the only way to redress a morally unconscionable situation. All of us are familiar with the refrain that our budgets are moral documents reflecting our values as a society. One of our values must be that no one will be denied public health insurance because of immigration status or age. Our message here in Connecticut ought to be: no matter where you’re from, you are a full member of our community; we will insure you receive care in your time of need; your life is worth saving and nurturing. This is a value we must enshrine in our budget by expanding Husky for all.

Surely we have the resources to do the right thing. Some folks have raised questions about the cost of this measure. But there are 12 people in this state—12 billionaires—who have seized

more than a billion dollars each since the start of the pandemic alone. And yet thousands of our immigrant residents are suffering unnecessarily. At a time when we face a multi-billion dollar surplus, when our Rainy Day Fund is overflowing, and most important, when our wealthiest corporations and residents are prospering, we face a historic opportunity to invest in the public good by expanding Husky for all.

That's why our coalition thanks lawmakers for the first steps you have taken in previous sessions to move in this direction. The 60 organizations that make up Recovery For All urge and support you to go further. Don't stop at age 12 or age 18 or age 26 or any age—let's not rest until all our residents have access to Husky.

Because let's be clear: We're living in an era when some forces in our country want to restrict and destroy the very idea of multiracial democracy. I'm proud that here in Connecticut the vast majority of us believe in protecting and expanding multiracial democracy. One of the clearest ways to uphold this value—one of the clearest ways to chart a path toward a more equitable Connecticut—is by expanding Husky for all.

Thank you.